CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 10 June 1999, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Mohamed-Salah Dembri Algeria

GE.99-62286 (E)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 827th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

First of all, on behalf of all of us, I should like to extend a warm welcome to the new representative of Nigeria in the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Pius Ikpefuan Ayewoh. I am particularly happy to welcome him in view of the fact that he represented his country in Algiers for four years, in the course of which he made a major contribution to strengthening the relations between our two countries and promoting an Africa of unity, prosperity and solidarity.

On the list of speakers for today I have the representative of the Russian Federation, following which we will consider a request from Jamaica, which wishes to participate as an observer in the work of the Conference during the 1999 session.

I invite the representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Sidorov, to take the floor.

Mr. SIDOROV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, I would like to begin by thanking you for giving me the floor and to take the opportunity to congratulate you on taking up this post, to wish you every success and to assure you of my delegation's readiness for constructive cooperation. I should also like to welcome our new colleagues in the Conference who have recently joined us.

The NATO aggression against sovereign Yugoslavia has gravely complicated the international climate. The world has been faced with a new attempt to make force prevail. Russia firmly rejects this approach, which runs counter to the trend towards the evolution of a multipolar world order, as well as to the legitimate interests of the majority of States. The military operation by NATO in the Balkans has flouted the foundations of international law and the United Nations Charter. The list of the many victims of aggression grows day by day. Especially outrageous is the fact that the alliance is using inhumane types of weapon which have indiscriminate effects, such as cluster bombs and munitions containing depleted uranium, whose principal victims are the civilian population. One of the most densely populated corners of the continent has suffered enormous ecological damage which threatens to extend to neighbouring regions.

We consider that the completion of the process of finalizing the United Nations Security Council draft resolution on Kosovo which was worked out by the G-8 Ministers for Foreign Affairs in Bonn is a sound basis for the immediate cessation of attacks on Yugoslavia with missiles and bombs.

The celebrations on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of NATO graphically demonstrated that the genuine transformation of the alliance from a military into a primarily political organization, about which so much has been said recently, has never taken place. The North Atlantic Alliance intends to address the problems associated with the risks and challenges of the new generation using methods from the time of the "cold war", with

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reliance on military force. The concluding documents of NATO's anniversary summit lay claim to the domination of this organization not only in European but also in world politics. What is particularly alarming is that the Alliance has officially dropped its former defensive strategy and openly proclaims its right to conduct any operations, including military operations, beyond its geographical area of responsibility.

In Russia there is serious concern about the North Atlantic Organization's declaration on "transparency without geographical limits". This means a further eastward advance by the Alliance to the very borders of the Russian Federation. In this connection, I would like to remind you that our position of principle as regards NATO's expansion is well known and has not been changed.

The bill on the establishment of a national anti-missile defence system recently adopted by the House of Representatives of the United States Congress can only be considered as a further step aimed at undermining the 1972 ABM Treaty. The Russian delegation has already noted in its statement on 11 May that such actions could lead to the breakdown of the existing structure of treaties and agreements in the field of strategic offensive and defensive weapons and pose a threat to the whole disarmament process. Hence the work of the Conference on Disarmament in 1999 is proceeding against the background of a worsening international situation, demonstrating that our forum is highly sensitive to political developments in the world. All the circumstances enumerated above were of course bound to have an impact on the effectiveness of the CD's activities and have objectively contributed to delaying a start to our substantive work. Nevertheless I should like to highlight the priority elements of the Conference's work as the Russian delegation sees them.

The issues of "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament" have always been the focus of Russia's foreign policy. Russia has been taking consistent steps to reduce nuclear arsenals and place qualitative limitations on them, both unilaterally and on a bilateral footing with the United States of America. The nuclear arms race of the times of the "cold war" can now definitely be said to be over. It is difficult to deny that much has already been done by the two largest nuclear Powers in this respect in recent years. However, nuclear disarmament is a time-consuming and costly process which requires solutions to a whole range of financial, technical and environmental problems. This process is evolving today in accordance with concluded treaties and unilateral measures. In a number of important aspects this is being done ahead of schedule. We are in favour of other nuclear Powers joining our efforts to reduce nuclear armaments.

We would like to emphasize that deep cuts in strategic offensive weapons are possible only if strategic stability in the world is maintained. In this connection I wish to remind you that the initiative put forward by Russian President B.N. Yeltsin at the forty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly on 26 September 1994 for the development of a treaty on nuclear security and strategic stability is still on the negotiating table. We continue to urge that all nuclear weapons should be relocated back onto the territories of the nuclear Powers.

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The process for the reduction of strategic offensive weapons is linked in the most direct way possible with strict compliance with the provisions o the 1972 ABM Treaty. There is an intrinsic interrelationship between strategic offensive weapons and strategic defensive weapons, one laid down i the ABM Treaty itself in the form of a clear understanding that, given parit in terms of strategic offensive weapons, the emergence of strategic means of defence in the hands of one of the parties would be equivalent to an increas in the power of a pre-emptive nuclear strike. It follows from this interrelationship that deep cuts in strategic offensive weapons are feasible only if restrictions are placed on the ABM system.

The ABM Treaty is a key component of the whole structure of nuclear disarmament agreements, a basis for supporting strategic stability and ensuring international security. That is why it affects the interests of th majority of the world's States. It is no accident that many CD delegations lend political support to the ABM Treaty and express concern about its futur At present a real threat is emerging that the existing agreements will be wrecked. This stems from the well-known plans of the United States to deplo a national anti-missile defence system, which is prohibited under the ABM Treaty and could lead to its de facto abrogation. Such actions would have extremely adverse consequences. At the very least they would make further reductions of strategic offensive weapons much more difficult, would trigger new round of the strategic offensive and defensive weapons arms race and wou have a negative impact on the regime of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Instead of the expected curbing of the process of proliferation, the world community could be faced with effort to encourage it.

We consider that it is pointless at this stage to plunge into theoretical discussions concerning future practical steps to eliminate nucl weapons, still less to set artificial deadlines to that effect. We are convinced that an effective and logical step to be undertaken in the field multilateral nuclear disarmament following the nuclear test ban should be a convention prohibiting the production of fissile material for weapons purposes. The unanimous support enjoyed by the FMCT resolution in the United Nations General Assembly once again confirmed the importance the international community attaches to this issue.

Russia is in favour of the earliest possible re-establishment of the ad hoc committee on the FMCT. Last year the CD made good progress towards resumption of work on this question. We think it would be wrong in this respect to waste time searching for alternative issues in the field of nucl disarmament topics, thus ignoring the repeatedly reconfirmed consensus on a FMCT.

We understand the concern of many CD participants who display heighte interest in nuclear disarmament issues. At the same time, we too are entit to count on our partners' understanding of our position in this field. I should like to stress that both last year and this year Russia has repeated demonstrated its flexibility and readiness for compromises on this range of

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issues. However, solutions in keeping with the interests of all delegations can be arrived at only through give and take and only by mutual, not unilateral, concessions.

Useful work was accomplished last year on "negative" security assurances, which enabled the participants to "synchronize their watches" on a very important issue related to the strengthening of international peace and security. The exchange of views showed that the positions of delegations do not always coincide. This is understandable, because we live in a dynamically evolving world. However, it proved possible to identify new interesting developments in this area and reach an understanding on the necessity for further active efforts in identifying a common approach to the form and substance of NSAs. I am convinced that difficult but interesting work lies ahead. In this connection we support the speedy re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on NSAs with the previous mandate.

For our part we would like to confirm our readiness in principle to expand the range of countries which benefit from the existing system of security assurances, through intensification of the process of creating nuclear-weapon-free zones, while consolidating the obligation of the non-nuclear countries not to acquire nuclear weapons and not to place or deploy them on their territory. At present 107 States have already signed treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones or have become participants in such zones. Thus, negative security assurances have been extended to an area covering more than 50 per cent of the world's surface. We seek to continue this process.

The exploration of outer space, which started in Russia, opens up broad prospects for world civilization. Outer space belongs to all of mankind, and consequently any activities carried out in it and any possible benefits should be used in the interests of all countries and all of mankind. The problems involved in preventing an arms race in outer space have been for many years and continue to be among the highest priorities for Russian diplomacy. It is worth remembering a number of Russian initiatives in this field. The most significant include proposals for the conclusion of treaties prohibiting the deployment of any kind of weapon in outer space and banning the use of force in outer space and from outer space against the Earth. Despite rather extensive support throughout the world, these initiatives have never been put into practice for a number of reasons.

The 1967 Outer Space Treaty does not lay down a general prohibition on the use of outer space for military purposes. The international community has not yet drawn up rules prohibiting the deployment, use and testing in space of weapons other than weapons of mass destruction. The progressive development of space technology and the latest high-technology weapons systems can provide a positive incentive for some States to use this legal loophole for purposes inconsistent with peaceful activities in the zone around the Earth.

In our view, the speedy development of an international legal regime prohibiting the deployment of offensive weapons in outer space should become one of the principal tasks of the world community. We fully share the view of

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those who deem it better to consider the prevention of an arms race in outer space today rather than wasting vast resources on the disarmament of outer space tomorrow. To our mind, by no means all has yet been done to prevent the zone around the Earth from becoming an arena of military confrontation.

Outer space issues are also becoming more topical in the light of the fundamental importance of preserving the 1972 ABM Treaty in its present state. This instrument, I wish to remind you, prohibits the development, testing or deployment in outer space of components of an anti-ballistic missile defence. The Treaty regime frees outer space from an entire class of weapons, namely ABM weapons. If we succeed in preserving the ABM Treaty, there will be a real chance of preventing a new cycle in the arms race both on Earth and in outer space.

Under General Assembly resolution 53/76, our Conference on Disarmament is assigned a primary role in further work on military issues in outer space. The resolution received 165 votes in favour and not a single one against. We regret that the important work conducted on this issue in the CD at the beginning of the 1990s was interrupted halfway. We are of the opinion that many useful advances and suggestions from our partners were unjustly forgotten later. In this connection Russia lends its support to the proposal made by the Chinese delegation for the resumption of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space in 1999.

We should like to confirm once again that Russia has always supported and continues to support a step-by-step process aimed at achieving a genuine global ban on anti-personnel mines. We have repeatedly and at the highest level declared our support for the noble goals of the Ottawa Convention. At the same time we are convinced that the problem of mines should be addressed in a comprehensive manner, taking into account the actual defensive and economic capabilities and geopolitical situation of each State.

We welcome the entry into force of amended Protocol II to the 1980 "Inhumane Weapons" Convention last December. At present intensive work is under way in Russia to prepare for its ratification. This notwithstanding, we have already put into practice a number of its provisions, especially those concerning mine clearance activities.

We take a positive view of the outcome of the preparatory meeting for the first annual conference of the States parties to the Protocol, which was held recently in Geneva. We believe that a sound basis has been laid for the success of this important event in December.

Today we see no alternative forum to the Conference on Disarmament which could involve key producers and consumers of anti-personnel mines in negotiations and achieve constructive cooperation between States parties and non-parties to the Ottawa Convention. In this regard, we express our readiness to discuss, under item 6 of the agenda, "Comprehensive programme of disarmament", the question of the phased prohibition of APLs. As a first step in this direction the Conference could embark on the drafting of a universal agreement banning the transfer of APLs. We regret that we did not succeed in

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establishing an ad hoc committee on APLs last year, although we came very close. However, should circumstances prevent us from taking such a decision this time as well, we should immediately reactivate the work of the Special Coordinator on the basis of the previous mandate.

Russia attaches great significance to the issue of transparency in conventional armaments, and recognizes its positive role in creating a climate of confidence between different countries. In saying this, we are aware that it is just one of various confidence-building measures. What is most important, of course, is to reduce political and, indeed, military tension in a number of regions of the world. We recognize that much has already been done in this direction, either in the framework of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms or in the United Nations Disarmament Commission. In our view, the Conference, in considering this issue, should define its own role and possible contribution in order to avoid duplication of efforts being undertaken in other international forums.

We are of the opinion that transparency in the supply of arms can be a key factor in preventing the destabilizing accumulation of such weapons and armed conflicts. At the same time this transparency should not jeopardize the national security of States. We are convinced that work on transparency in armaments should be viewed not as an end in itself in addressing arms control issues but as just one of the means of establishing a climate of trust between States. We consider that in order to curb the destabilizing accumulation of conventional arms, it would be useful if "transparency" came first of all from importers, because information on arms purchases is more sensitive for them - from the point of view of national security - than for exporters.

The Russian delegation fully supports the efforts being made by the distinguished Ambassador of Switzerland, E. Hofer, to find a fair solution to the problem of expansion of the membership of the CD. We are of the opinion that we should make a further attempt this year to help the five States - Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Tunisia and Ecuador - to acquire the status of full members of the Conference. We also have no objection to appointing special coordinators on the issues of the improved and effective functioning of the CD and the review of its agenda, as we did last year.

The Russian delegation, as in the past, is committed to constructive cooperation and the search for mutually acceptable solutions to urgent international disarmament issues. We hope that a spirit favouring practical work will prevail during this CD session.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. In particular, I would like to express publicly my deep appreciation for the support he has provided to the Chair in its difficult search for a compromise on the Conference's programme of work.

We have reached the end of the list of speakers. Would any other delegation like to take the floor at this stage?

(The President)

As I announced at the start of the meeting, I propose, if you agree, that the Conference should take a decision on a request made by Jamaica to participate as an observer in our 1999 session, without considering it first in an informal plenary session. This request is reproduced in document CD/WP.502, which has been distributed. May I take it that this request is acceptable?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): As I have had occasion to inform you, the Chair has begun a series of consultations which have enabled it, in an initial stage, to opt for a comprehensive approach as the only means of steering us towards the desired consensus on a balanced programme of work. These consultations have also clearly brought out the need to focus all our efforts on the progressive development of compromises on the two pending issues, to wit, nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. In this context, the Chair has sought to translate in practical terms the elements capable of serving as the basis for a consensus. I am sure that everyone will acknowledge the difficulties involved in this task, and it was precisely that recognition, which I detected among all delegations, that serves to confirm my hopes and fuel my efforts each day. While recognizing the obstacles we have yet to overcome, the emergence of certain encouraging signs prompts us to persevere in the course which we have set for ourselves. The support of all delegations in this crucial phase is essential in order to frame an agreement which will enable the Conference to commence its substantive work without further delay.

Lastly, as we have come to the end of our agenda, I would like to announce that the next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 17 June 1999, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.